

# SPRING TRAINING WITH Jay Buhner

by Julie Dexter



**Y**ou may know him as “Bone”—**Jay Buhner**, powerful right-handed hitter in **Major League Baseball**. Buhner began his baseball career with the Pittsburgh Pirates in the 1984 amateur draft and was traded shortly thereafter to the **New York Yankees**—making his Major League debut in 1987.

In 1988, Buhner was traded (for **Ken Phelps**) by the New York Yankees to our own **Seattle Mariners**—a trade often considered one of the worst made by the

Yankees of that period, and the best in Mariner history!

Buhner retired at the end of the 2001 season as one of the greatest Mariners ever.

Buhner’s booming bat—and prematurely bald head—made him one of the most popular players on a star-studded Mariners team that included such superstars as **Alex Rodriguez** and **Ken Griffey, Jr.** Among the most recognizable players of his day, Buhner was—and is—well-known for his shaved head and thick goatee. He put that recognition to

good cause as well, hosting an annual “Buhner Buzz Night,” where fans would shave their heads at the ballpark with the proceeds going to charity.

Whether hitting one 450 feet or nailing a runner from the right field corner—“the bone yard”—with his cannon arm, Jay Buhner always delivered, and he continues to deliver today as a very active, enthusiastic part of the community. *thrive!* was very excited to speak with Jay for this Spring issue:

***thrive! When you were traded to Seattle Mariners from the New York***

***Yankees in 1988, what was your first impression of Seattle and Washington?***

**J.B.:** I loved Seattle! It was always one of the more fun cities to come into. I always enjoyed it when we played here, about once a year. Seattle has a different atmosphere, it's very eclectic.

When I got traded, I felt it was a great opportunity to play for the Seattle Mariners!

***thrive! Born in Kentucky but raised in Texas, you have made it very clear you are "proud to be a Texan"—but following your retirement in 2001, you chose Washington State as the place to live and raise your family... why?***

**J.B.:** Well, right now I have to admit there are times we think about moving back to Texas—especially with the rain we've been having lately and the mudslides just down the road!

But really, after 14 years of being with the Mariners, we have developed a lot of close ties and connections here. We feel very connected to Seattle.

Traveling all over from place to place is too hard on everyone. We have set down roots here—the kids have their schools and friends, and we have lots of ties here in this city.

***thrive! When you retired from the Mariners, were you concerned about how you were now going to keep in shape?***

**J.B.:** Never at all—I admit I am a vain sort of guy, being in shape has always been who I am so I knew I would continue—it would be hard to pull the plug on that now! Though I admit I did take a year off immediately following retirement, to relax and unplug. But only for that first year, then I got right back into it.

***thrive! What do you do to keep in shape?***

**J.B.:** I run. I work out three days a week, with at least 45 minutes of mixing three different exercises along with

treadmill for a good cardio workout—my workout consists of bench/incline bench/treadmill for 1-1/2 min. at 6.5 min. mile pace, then leg press/leg extension/reverse curls/treadmill—tricep lock outs/curls/tricep dumbbell/treadmill—lat pulldowns/seated row/dumbbell flies/treadmill—ab dolly/crunches/hyper extensions/treadmill—repeat, keeping heart rate up. Keeps the body fat down!

My wife, Leah, even has her own personal trainer and for the past three years has been doing her part to keep up with me. And our three kids (ages 10, 12 and 14) are all very involved in sports—right now it's basketball, coming up on baseball/softball season.

***thrive! Living here in the great Northwest, are there any particular outdoor activities you enjoy?***

**J.B.:** I love being involved with groups like the **Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife**—I'm very involved in the **Evergreen Sportsman Show** coming up. I do a lot of work with boating safety, getting kids to wear life jackets, stuff like that.

I enjoy working with local businesses, my wife and I have done some commercials for some local businesses. And I'm really excited to be heading to spring training to work with coaching the minor leagues!

My kids are all involved with baseball and softball, so I get out on the field a lot, help out with some coaching.

I love fly fishing. When I retired, the team gave me a drift boat so I try to get out on the water as much as I can, get in some rowing. I have a couple of ponds on my property, and Snoqualmie is right out my front door...

I love snowmobiling... I was never allowed to ski or snowboard because of my occupation, so this past New Year's the family and I went up to Whistler, took some boarding lessons. It was a blast!

Definitely going to do some more of that!

***thrive! Are you and your family concerned about diet and nutrition as well as keeping active and in shape?***

**J.B.:** Yes, we have a lot of attention on diet and nutrition. Mrs. Buhner makes sure we watch what we eat to assure a healthy balance and the right intake—we eat a lot of fish and chicken along with healthy fruit and vegetables; no big carb stuff late at night... and we take multi-vitamins daily.

***thrive! What do you feel you do to further Washington's healthy systems?***

**J.B.:** I'm very involved in the community, in various health-oriented organizations as I like to keep my eye on things—to be involved in and understand what's going on.

My father was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes at the age of 14, so I have a lot of awareness and attention on diabetes—I grew up with that in my home, insulin, the whole thing. So yes, I have a lot of attention on it, I may be too anal, really! We get regular checkups and make sure we all get good exercise and healthy meals. That way we avoid diabetes being a part of our lives.

So I am involved with juvenile diabetes, as well as cystic fibrosis and muscular dystrophy—along with some of my Mariners teammates—and I work with **Children's Hospital** and various other entities in the community (including the Healthiest State in the Nation Campaign!) as a spokesperson, supporter.

I help put on the C.F. Golf Tourney which is one of the largest single-day fundraising events in the country. Also am involved in the Black Tie Gala every October at the Sheraton downtown. I have some close friends on the board of Children's so I stay in touch with them and visit three or so times a year.

***thrive! More than any other player to date it seems "Bone" had a very special***

*connection with Mariner fans—they shaved their heads to be more like you, had a special name for the right field corner... tell us about the inspiration you felt from your fans?*

**J.B.:** I feel a close bond with this community, that's what made me decide to continue to live in the Seattle area. It's a great community, very giving, very caring. It's amazing to see the amount of generosity in the various charity events here, fundraisers and auctions...

My folks taught me to always be proud of who you are, where you are, where you're from... and to always give back to those less fortunate than you. Everybody has a responsibility to be a role model, to give back to the community. Everybody needs to get involved. A little bit goes a long way!

Because of all the generosity I see here in Seattle, all that Seattle and the

Mariners gave to me, I feel very strongly about giving back. I've chosen to live here in the Seattle area when I could have chosen to live anywhere I wanted to go because of that sense of community, that caring and generosity.

***thrive! If you could tell Washington how to become the healthiest state, what would you say?***

**J.B.:** I'd love to see Washington become the Healthiest State in the Nation! I think to do that we need to get away from the PSPs (Sony PlayStation Portables) and GameBoys, get outside and enjoy the great outdoors—especially on days like we're having today! It's beautiful out!

We need to watch what we eat... eat more chicken and fish, and healthy greens. Exercise more, a couple of times a week...

A little bit goes a long way!

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*this is how we do it...*

Everybody has a responsibility to be a role model, to give back to the community. Everybody needs to get involved. "A little bit goes a long way" toward making Washington the Healthiest State in the Nation.